



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

For release: Oct. 29, 2015

Contact: Sherry Llewellyn, 410-313-2236
stllewellyn@howardcountymd.gov

Police prepare for safe Halloween

Detectives conduct pre-holiday check of registered sex offenders

Howard County police want to remind residents that officers will be patrolling on Halloween to help ensure a safe and fun evening for all. Officers will be in residential neighborhoods to be visible to citizens and make sure children stay safe.

Officers will also be alert for vandalism, theft and destruction of property. They will conduct speed enforcement activities and be on the lookout for drunk or impaired drivers. Nearly half of all crash fatalities on Halloween night in the last five years involved a drunk driver, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

In preparation for Halloween, Howard County police recently conducted a check of all registered sex offenders in the county. The goal of the sweep was to identify anyone in violation of the registry's reporting requirements and to remind registered offenders that they are prohibited from participating in trick-or-treating.

Officers accounted for all 85 sex offenders registered in Howard County. Registered offenders on probation were reminded that they are forbidden from participating in Halloween. Detectives conduct regular visits to verify sex offenders' residences and places of employment. They also follow up on complaints from the community about offenders who may not be living at their registered locations. A link to the Maryland Sex Offender Registry can be found at www.HCPD.org.

In an effort to prepare for a safe Halloween, police are offering the following tips:

- Encourage children to trick-or-treat with a group, and before dark. After dark, an adult chaperone should carry a flashlight and choose well-lighted streets.
- Wear costumes that are short, snug and flame retardant. Also be sure to wear light colors or reflective tape. Avoid masks that can obstruct vision.
- Teach children they should NEVER go into a stranger's home or car.
- Remind children not to eat treats before they have been inspected by parents. Never eat candy that has been opened.
- Remind children not to take shortcuts through backyards, alleys or playing fields.
- Leave porch or other outside lights on to make clear that trick-or-treaters are welcome. Don't let children approach homes that are dark.
- Remove objects from your yard that might present a hazard to visitors.
- Drive slowly all evening – you never know when a trick-or-treater may dart into the street.

During the day on Oct. 31, the HCPD's Pathway Patrol Section is hosting "Bike with a Cop." Kids ages 5-12 and their parents are invited to bike around the Columbia Lakefront with officers. Bike-friendly costumes are welcome. For more information, visit www.HCPD.org.

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